Supporting Your VISTA Project & Region

Project Performance Measurement & Data Collection

Welcome to the second training video for Supporting Your VISTA Project & Region. The second section of your Virtual Leader Orientation training.

In the previous training – "eGrants & VISTA Recruitment" – you got a taste of how you might support your project or region in their recruitment and marketing efforts, and how eGrants can be used as a tool to facilitate that process.

The information in this training will present a second way that VISTA Leaders can support their projects and regions by building their capacity to collect and report accurate and reliable data related to VISTA Project Performance Measures. **[[Next Slide]]**

Learning Objectives

- Understanding Performance Measures
- Your Project's Performance Measures
- Data Collection Tools
- Tracking VISTA Time

AmeriCorps VISTA members generated **$206 MILLION** in cash and in-kind resources to support local efforts to overcome poverty. That's more than **DOUBLE** every dollar invested in the program.

By the end of this training video you'll know more about:

- **[[Click]]** The AmeriCorps VISTA Project Performance Measures
- **[[Click]]** The specific Performance Measures that apply to your VISTA project.
- **[[Click]]** Some sample data collection tools that can help you start or revise a data collection plan for your project, and
- **[[Click]]** A quick note about tracking VISTA time.

[[Next Slide]]

Action Items!

Recommended Prep Work:
- Ask your supervisor to review your project's:
  - Approved project application
  - Data collection plan

  Have copies on hand during this training.
- Have a copy of your VISTA Leader Assignment Description (VLAD) ready for review.

Addressing these items before you move forward will help you get the most out of this Virtual Leader Orientation training!

Before we move ahead, let's pause to address a few important Action Items:

- Ask your supervisor to review your project's approved project application & data collection plan. Have copies on hand during this training.
- Do you have a copy of your VISTA Leader Assignment Description, or VLAD, available for review during this training?

[[Click]] The answers to the questions on this slide will help you engage more fully with this training. If you don't know these answers or have copies of these documents – we recommend pausing the training here to complete this prep work. Once you're ready, coming back and continue with the training. [[Next Slide]]

Let's go back to "The Basics" where you learned about the Six VISTA Leader Roles – The Ambassador, The Mentor, The Recruiter, The Educator or Facilitator, The Liaison & The Resource Generator.

In this section, three of those roles take center stage:

[[Click]] The Educator/Facilitator; because you'll providing guidance to your VISTA members about the data collection required for your project and facilitating the gathering of that data,

[[Click]] The Mentor; because successful and accurate data collection will require providing constructive feedback and responding to any concerns your members may raise during the process, and

[[Click]] The Resource Generator; because the project data and information collected from your VISTA members will help you tell the story of your VISTA members' impact on the local community or wider region.

The skills you develop as an Educator/Facilitator, Mentor, and Resource Generator will

help you effectively:

- Educate your members about VISTA Performance Measurement
- Facilitate the collection of and follow-up for data and information submitted by your VISTA members
- Use collected data and information to create a compelling and evidence based proposal about your VISTA project for potential supporters, donors, or grant-making institutions. **[[Next Slide]]**

Before we get into specifics; Why is it important to collect data?

There are three main reasons. **[[Click]]**

First is Accountability. CNCS awards AmeriCorps VISTA resources to projects who submit strong project applications, which include the anticipated positive impact their project will have on individuals, families & communities living in poverty. Collecting data from these projects allows us to hold them accountable to those anticipated program impacts, and to provide technical assistance if it looks like projects need some extra help.

When we collect data, we're also using it as a way to identify high quality projects that are having a significant positive impact in their Focus Area. When we identify top-performing projects through the data they report we can better allocate available resources to grow those projects to meet the needs of more people or more communities.

And finally, but perhaps most importantly, data helps us tell the story of the impact of AmeriCorps VISTA across the country. Data collected and reporting by projects

throughout 2017, and evaluated by CNCS, allows us to share statistics like the one you see in this image. That more than 800,000 volunteers were mobilized across the US in a single year by AmeriCorps VISTA members and that they served an amazing 8 million hours in their communities! The more data we collect, the more compelling the story of AmeriCorps VISTA gets, and the more people we can engage in national service each year. **[[Next Slide]]**

AmeriCorps VISTA Data Collection & Tracking

- Project Progress Reports (PPRs)
  - Quarterly (4x/project year) or Semi-Annual (2x/project year)
  - Collects both narrative information and performance measure data
- VISTA Progress Report Supplement (VPRS)
  - Once per year in line with the Federal Fiscal Year (10/01– 9/30)
- Sponsor Verification Forms
  - An eGrants form submitted by projects every two weeks to certify the service status of their VISTA members.

Remember! As a VISTA leader you cannot complete any of these reports or forms in eGrants. Your role involves supporting the accurate and timely collection of data and narrative information, NOT preparing or submitting these reports.

Now, that you know why we collect data let's talk about what kind of data AmeriCorps VISTA projects are required to collect.

Every VISTA project across the United States is required to submit Project Progress Reports either Quarterly (4 times per project year) and Semi-Annually (two times per project year).
- The PPR collects both narrative information and performance measure data based on the approved project application.

Once per year (in the fall) every VISTA project must also submit a VISTA Progress Report Supplement.
- The VPRS aligns with the Federal Fiscal Year NOT the project year, and collects only performance measure data. All VISTA projects report on the same data in this report, which allows CNCS to tell the story of AmeriCorps VISTA impact across the country during the previous federal fiscal year.

Every two weeks – in line with VISTA pay periods – projects submit the Sponsor Verification Form
- The Sponsor Verification Form is used to certify the service status of VISTA

members (ie. Whether they are still serving, or if and why their service has ended).

[[Click]] As a VISTA Leader, it is critical to remember that your role involves supporting the accurate and timely collection of data and narrative information NOT preparing or submitting these reports. VISTA Leaders cannot complete any of these reports or forms in eGrants. **[[Next Slide]]**

Getting Started

Information in this training.

Performance Measurement & Data Collection Resources
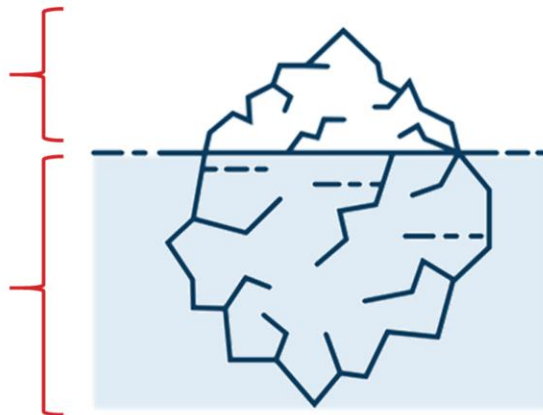
Before we dive any further into Project Performance Measurement and Data Collection, **[[Click]]** it's important to understand that AmeriCorps VISTA project performance measurement and data collection is informed by a vast collection of resources and tools. **[[Click]]**In this training video we'll only be discussing the areas of knowledge above the surface to get you started.

Now's a great time to take a look at your VISTA Leader Assignment Description, or VLAD. Are any of your assigned activities related to collecting data of any kind from your VISTA members? Pause the video here and find out. Then come back to continue the training with a focus on how this information might help you in your particular assignment.

If your VISTA Leader Assignment Description involves a deep dive into developing or improving performance measure and data collection processes for your project, please refer to the extensive resources and tools that are linked under "Performance Measurement and Data Collection Resources" below this video. **[[Next Slide]]**

So where did these Performance Measures that your VISTA project is required to report on come from?

CNCS' current Performance Measurement framework was created as a way to provide a common focal point of agency-wide Priority Measures for CNCS' work across all programs and initiatives. **[[Click]]**

[[Click]] Within this framework all AmeriCorps VISTA Projects report on a specific set of Performance Measures related to Capacity Building & Leverage where we measure how VISTA members maximize the value we add to grantees, partners and participants. **[[Next Slide]]**

Key Performance Measure Definitions

Performance Measure: Measures progress toward goals, and is also used to improve progress, reduce risks, or improve cost-effectiveness.

Capacity Building: Activities that expand the scale, reach, efficiency, or effectiveness of programs and organizations. Activities may also leverage resources for programs and organizations. Capacity building activities may expand services, enhance delivery of services, or generate additional resources. These activities achieve lasting positive outcomes for the beneficiary populations.

Output: The amount (number, unit) of service provided.

Outcome: Changes that occur for individuals, communities, organizations, or the environment. Change can be in attitude and beliefs, knowledge/skills, behavior, or condition.

Let's take a minute to discuss some key definitions that will help us talk about your project's performance measurement goals.

Most importantly, what is a "Performance Measure"?

A Performance Measure measures progress toward goals, and is also used to improve progress, reduce risks, or improve cost-effectiveness.

We mentioned earlier that all AmeriCorps VISTA Performance Measures focus on Capacity Building – a term that should be familiar if you served as VISTA members before becoming Leaders. So what is Capacity Building? **[[Click]]**

Capacity Building is a set of activities that expand the scale, reach, efficiency, or effectiveness of programs and organizations. Activities may also leverage resources for programs and organizations. For example, capacity building activities may expand services, enhance delivery of services, or generate additional resources. These activities achieve lasting positive outcomes for the beneficiary populations served by CNCS-supported organizations.

The last two definitions are closely related & can sometimes cause confusion. Every performance measure that is collected and reported on will be either an "Output" or an

"Outcome."

[[Click]] An Output measures the amount (a number or unit) of service provided. Such as students receiving tutoring or houses built. Again, an output counts a product – like a house or a bag of emergency food aid.

[[Click]] An Outcome measures changes that occur for individuals, communities, organizations, or the environment. Change can be in attitude and beliefs, knowledge/skills, behavior, or condition.
Again, an outcome is measuring progress, usually a positive change for program beneficiaries – like number of students graduating from high school, or number of homeless individuals obtaining stable housing. **[[Next Slide]]**

Every VISTA project across the country is required to measure at least one Performance Measure Output and one Performance Measure Outcome.

Each Performance Measure Output and Outcome is partnered with definitions and guidance about how to calculate, measure, and collect data.
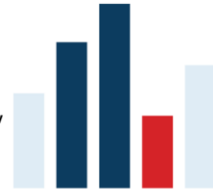
[[Click]] Let's take a break from the video for a quick Action Item: Navigate to the Performance Measurement resources linked below this video. Pause the training video and take a few minutes to explore these resources & connect them to your project. Review the Performance Measurement section of your project's approved application. Try to match at least one Output or Outcome identified by your project's application with the resources in the links below. Then come back to resume the training. **[[Next Slide]]**

Action Item: Supervisor Discussion

Discuss with your Supervisor:
- Are you responsible for collecting VISTA project data?
- What needs to be collected?
  - This may include numerical data, supporting information for that data, and/or additional narrative information.
- When does it need to be collected by?
- Is there already a system in place to collect this data?

As a VISTA Leader one of your service activities may be coordinating the collection of data from your project's VISTA members in preparation for your Supervisor or Project Director using that data to complete required project reports.

If you haven't already had the opportunity to discuss data collection with your supervisor, take the time to discuss these questions:

- **[[Click]]** Are you responsible for collecting VISTA project data?
- **[[Click]]** What type of data needs to be collected? As was mentioned in the previous slides this may include numerical data, supporting information for that data, and/or additional narrative information.
- **[[Click]]** When does it need to be collected by?
- **[[Click]]** Is there already a system in place to collect this data?

Once you have this information, you'll be better prepared to manage your time and efforts around data collection activities.

[[Next Slide]]

Collecting Other Data & Information

Anti-Poverty Measures	Member Development Data	Narrative Information
What: Data about how the program helps individuals and communities out of poverty. Not every VISTA project reports on this data.	**What:** VISTA projects are expected to support the professional development of their members.	**What:** VISTA projects report in a narrative style on a number of topics related to project progress.
How: Reported much like Capacity Building Performance Measures with Outputs and Outcomes. The data collection method will be listed in the project application if applicable.	**How:** Data is collected on a variety of topics, including, On-Site Orientation, Community Outreach, and Community Volunteer Recruitment, among others. Measured by the number of hours of training that your project provided to VISTAs members.	**How:** Narrative information is reported on the following topics: Challenges, Recruitment & Support, Training/Technical Assistance Needs, Partnerships & Collaboration Development, Resource Development, Sustainability; among others.

Now that you're beginning to understand the Capacity Building Performance Measure data that your project needs to report on, and that you as a VISTA Leader may need to facilitate the collection of, let's talk about the information that needs to be collected that isn't related to Capacity Building Performance Measure data.

Three other types of data that need to be collected and reported on through the Project Progress Report, or PPR are **[[Click]]**Anti-Poverty Performance Measures, **[[Click]]**Member Development Data, and **[[Click]]**Narrative Information. The chart above provides an introduction to what information is being captured. And how it is reported. You can pause the training here to read this information more closely, or you can continue on and return to this section when you're ready to work on your project's data collection plan in these areas.

More information about each of these additional areas of data or information collection can be found in the Project Progress Report Instructions – linked below. However, Leaders must remember that these instructions should only be used as a resource for guiding the collection of data. As a reminder, VISTA Leaders are not permitted to prepare, complete or submit Project Progress Reports or any other project reports. **[[Next Slide]]**

Data Collection Tools

- Collect via a text document & sort in a spreadsheet
  - Text Document Ex: Word or Google Docs
  - Spreadsheet Ex: Excel or Google Sheets

- Collect via an online survey & sort in a spreadsheet
  - Survey Ex: Google Survey or Survey Monkey
  - Spreadsheet Ex: Excel or Google Sheets

- Collect via a shared spreadsheet
  - Ex: SharePoint, SalesForce or Google Sheets
  - Lock some editing features to prevent data errors!

Collect data on a regular basis!

Monthly data collection is recommended!

VISTA Member Service Journals

Remember, this training only scratches the surface of AmeriCorps VISTA Performance Measures and data collection. With that in mind, here are some data collection approaches and tools to get you started as you think about how you might create or update the data collection process for your project or region.

You might:

- **[[Click]]** Collect data via a text document submitted by members & then sort that data into a spreadsheet to get totals, or you could;
- **[[Click]]** Collect data via an online survey and sort in a spreadsheet either manually or automatically, or you might;
- **[[Click]]** Collect data via a shared spreadsheet. If you use this method be sure to think about what information should be locked from editing to prevent data errors.

Regardless of what data collection tool or method that you create or your project uses, **[[Click]]** we highly recommend collecting data on a regular basis. Many projects see a high level of success with collecting data on a monthly basis from their members and sub-sites. **[[Click]]** Collecting data every month ensures that data and narrative experiences aren't forgotten, and allows projects to tally data according to

their project year for the Project Progress Reports, and to the Federal Fiscal Year for the VISTA Progress Report Supplement.

To assist with the accuracy of anecdotal information and service experiences being reported by your members, **[[Click]]** you might suggest to members that they keep a daily "service journal" where they can take brief notes about their activities and accomplishments.

For additional ideas regarding VISTA project data collection, see the resources and tools links below this video under "Performance Measure and Data Collection Resources" sub-heading "Further Learning" **[[Next Slide]]**

Tracking Time

- Some VISTA leaders track time for their project's VISTA members. This might include:
  - Collecting and documenting paper or digital timesheets
  - Tracking personal and medical leave used by VISTA members
  - Alerting the project director when a member is using leave time rapidly, or may be close to expending all available leave time.

Action Item – Ask Your Supervisor: Will you be supporting the project by collecting & tracking VISTA time?

A final area of data collection that VISTA Leaders may undertake to support their projects or regions is tracking time for their VISTA members. Although VISTA is not a traditional 9-5 job, or a standard 40 hour a week position; time keeping is a valuable management practice to ensure equity or parity between the VISTA's efforts and staff efforts, as well as tracking time off.

Collecting time sheets from VISTA members at sub-sites or project partners can also help ensure that Sponsor Verification Forms are completed accurately and in a timely manner. Your project sponsor is responsible for verifying the continued service of all VISTA members serving at your project. Their process for doing this may differ depending on where the members are serving.

When collecting and tracking timesheets, as a VISTA Leader you should take particular note of the number of sick and personal leave days being used by VISTA members, or members who may be serving below or above what might be considered reasonable hours of service – such as serving well below or well above 40 hours a week.

Concerns with sick and personal time might include members using sick or personal

time very quickly, or members who have been serving for a significant period of time without taking any time off who may benefit from a reminder about the importance of self-care.

Below this video you will find two examples of tools for tracking and recording VISTA time. Both of these resources are more complex spreadsheets. For smaller projects, simple paper timesheets may be equally effective. Remember, timesheets aren't required. Ask your supervisor about how your project tracks time.

[[Click]] You should also discuss whether you will be supporting the project by collecting and tracking VISTA time. **[[Next Slide]]**

Data collection can often seem like a chore because it requires detailed management to be successful, and is a reporting requirement for an AmeriCorps VISTA project. However, there are two great added benefits of data collection that VISTA Leaders should never overlook!

First, it gives you great information to use when promoting your VISTA project to the community, to supporters, or potential donors!

Second, the data and information provided by your members, gives you an opportunity to provide positive feedback for your VISTAs. Is one of your VISTAs who serves as a volunteer engagement coordinator feeling discouraged during their service year? Remind them about the number of volunteers they've recruited and trained since the start of their service!
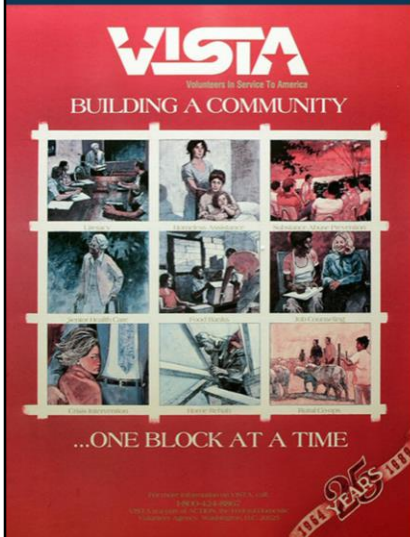
During this training you've gotten an introduction to:

- **[[Click]]** Performance Measurement & the AmeriCorps VISTA Project Performance Measures,
- **[[Click]]** How those Performance Measures apply to your VISTA project
- **[[Click]]** Sample data collection tools that can help you start or revise a data collection plan for your project, and
- **[[Click]]** Ways you might support your project in tracking VISTA time.

[[Next Slide]]

Up Next!

[[Click]] We know you'll use this new understanding to help tell the story of the impact of AmeriCorps VISTA in your community! **[[Click]]** Once you're ready to move on to the next topic scroll down to "Developing Resources, Connecting Partners & Supporting Your Supervisor."

[[Click]] Remember you can always come back to this video, reference the slides in the PDF version linked below, and use the other resources in this section whenever you need them!